



This year's FreedomWalk festival will include a JROTC wreath-laying at the National Law Enforcement Memorial.

# Freedom Walk

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FROM Sept. 19 through 21, U.S. military personnel, family members and civilian participants from around the world will gather in Washington, D.C., to walk in one of the nation's newest noncompetitive international sports events.

The walk will take participants around the monuments and parks in the nation's capital, to honor those who died to protect America's freedom and freedom abroad.

The second annual Reserve Officer Association FreedomWalk Festival is hosted by ROA, in cooperation with the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States.

The sport, known in Germany as volksmarching, brings participants together for fun, fitness and fellowship, ROA officials said.

American soldiers returning from Germany during the 1970s brought the sport to the United States and created the American Volkssport Association — the national sanctioning authority for volksmarching in America, with

more than 300 affiliated clubs.

Nobody keeps time; the satisfaction comes from completing trails of challenging distances. With a map to guide them, participants will walk trails of 4, 8 and 13 miles, from the ROA's Minuteman Memorial Building next to the U.S. Capitol, around the National Mall, monuments and Arlington National Cemetery.

Again this year, water and refreshments will be available at checkpoints staffed by members of such organizations as the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and ROA local chapters.

Because of the multiple trails, the walk challenges all participants. In 2002 the oldest participant was an Army World War II veteran who walks 12 kilometers a day.

The longest route in this year's event will be the "Mount to Hill Ultra-Marathon" of 44 kilometers, from the Purple Heart Memorial at the entrance to Mount Vernon, back to Capitol Hill.

This walking "civics lesson" makes the U.S. FreedomWalk Festival a wonderful program for youth groups, officials said. In 2002, Army JROTC

classmates from Huguenot High School in Richmond, Va., and the Army ROTC Marching Team from Vermont's Norwich University were the weekend's honor units.

Other youth groups also participated in 2002, and more are expected to turn out for this year's event.

Active-duty, National Guard and Reserve units are welcome to register teams, as are civilian-company teams.

This is an international program, with the Sunday route leading participants around the German-American Friendship Garden, Netherlands Carillon, Japanese cherry trees, a display of the Berlin Wall, and statues from Italy. The new 32-kilometer trail for this year's Sunday race will also pass the German Embassy, National Geographic Society's Explorers Hall and Chinatown's Friendship Arch.

All adult participants in the race will receive certificates and the U.S. FreedomWalk Medal. Children will receive certificates and patches, and may purchase the medal. 🇺🇸

COL Timothy H. Miner is chairman of the Reserve Officer Association's U.S. FreedomWalk Festival.



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